

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 275 474

RC 015 969

AUTHOR Evans, Stephanie; Crockett, Stanley
TITLE Coping Styles and Gender-Role: Some Implications for Mexican American Adult Education.
PUB DATE Oct 86
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; Behavior Patterns; Community Change; Community Coordination; Community Education; Community Involvement; *Coping; Educational Cooperation; Hispanic American Culture; *Mexican Americans; Network Analysis; Parent Education; *Role Conflict; Role Perception; *Sex Role; Social Networks

ABSTRACT

Passive coping behavior and traditional role-gender definitions affect learning needs of segments of the Mexican American adult community and may affect the behavioral development of younger family members. Networking within the community is useful in defining and meeting learning needs of adult Mexican Americans by creating cooperative, deliberately structured community change rather than individual learning in the classroom. Cooperation with elementary, secondary, and college educators helps detect needs of the adult community and offers approaches to teaching through parent education and participation programs and behavioral science theory. Individuals in private and public service agencies and businesses have valuable insights into learning needs of their consumers. An adult education class on networking may generate collaboratively developed lists of learning needs and may uncover needs of professional and service adults as well as needs of the target group. Curricula derived from such classes might help participants to find ways to work through threats from role changes, increase parent-child communication, and teach active coping behaviors. (LFL)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

FD275474

1

COPING STYLES AND GENDER-ROLE:
SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN ADULT EDUCATION

Stephanie Evans

Department of Secondary Education
California State University, Los Angeles

Stanley Crockett

El Monte Union High School District

El Monte, California

October 1986

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mr. Stephanie
Evans

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
- ☒ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

COPING STYLES AND GENDER-ROLE

RC015969

Abstract

Coping styles and gender-role definitions are discussed as possible variables in affecting the recruitment of working class Mexican Americans into adult education situations. The scope of the paper focuses upon educationally underserved Mexican American adults and strategies for surfacing and meeting critical learning needs. Both personal observation and published literature are used as a background of information. Community wide networking as an activity within adult education is suggested as a way of involving the target population as well as private and public sector service providers.

Coping Styles and Gender-Role:

Some Implications for Mexican American Adult Education

Latinos are the nation's most rapidly growing population. The largest group among Latinos are Mexican Americans. Adult educators wishing to serve working class Mexican Americans should tailor curriculum development and provider practices to the particular needs of needs of such communities. However, apparent needs such as citizenship and English as a Second Language classes may conceal deeper and more critical needs. An introduction to the latter needs may be accomplished through selected readings concerning Mexican Americans and Mexicans. In that many psychological and socio-emotional behavioral patterns of Mexican Americans are close to those of Mexicans (Acosta, 1984), the bilingual adult educator will profit from reading the literature of Mexican American and Mexican scholars.

The infrastructure of the working class Mexican American community has a meaningful intrastructure. Spanish is often spoken in the home and in the community. There are newspapers in Spanish, Hispanic radio and

television stations, and public and private sector service industries wherein Spanish is spoken.

Furthermore, the proximity of Mexico to the United States enables many Mexican Americans to relate to their cultural heritage within the land of their ancestors.

The size of working class Mexican American communities differs from state to state with the major communities being concentrated in southern border states. There are, however, substantially sized communities in such northern cities as Chicago. If the statistics offered in by the Immigration and Naturalization Service are correct, migration from Mexico to the United States is increasing. The change of populations from black to brown has become quite common in such states as California and Texas. And given the ongoing and predicted state of the Mexican economy, the northward movement may well increase. The challenge, then, for the adult educator is to meet the learning needs of this particular population.

There are two sets of variables which may be of help to the adult educator seeking to meet the learning

needs of the aforementioned population: coping styles and gender-role definitions and behaviors. While it is the case that many Mexican Americans exhibit a passive style of coping (Díaz-Guerrero, 1984), it does not follow that all Mexican Americans are passive in their coping (Andrade, 1980). Given Mendoza's comments concerning acculturation as a multidimensional process (1984), what will be said concerning passive styles of coping together with associated values needs to be carefully applied to specifically surfaced situations.

Díaz-Guerrero (1984) points out that Mexicans tend to modify self when facing stress whereas North Americans tend to attempt to modify the environment within which stress or problems arise. Gender-role, the second critical variable, needs also to be viewed within the context of differential acculturation. In the Mexican American family close to the mores of traditional Mexico, the father is supreme head of the family (Acosta, 1984). He expects unquestioned obedience from his wife and children. The mother is self-sacrificing and finds her rewards in the love and gratitude of her children.

While Díaz-Guerrero's research (1984) is persuasive concerning coping styles, there are signs of change in contemporary Mexican society concerning gender-role definitions (Arzipe, 1986). Life in an industrialized society on either side of the border allows Mexican and Mexican American women to earn their own incomes and, as a consequence, gain greater control over their lives as individuals and women. Yet, at the same time, there are strains in familial and social structures that speak to the deeper more critical learning needs referred to earlier in this paper. In order to gain an insight into such needs, the adult educator can seek indirect rather than direct evidence of their existence.

Within California as well as in many other states, the high rate of Latino high school dropout behavior has reached serious proportions. While this may speak to a healthy future for the adult educator waiting to welcome adults who have not graduated from high school but are now cognizant of their educational needs, it is the present need that this paper concerns. Informal conversations and in class discussion with

a group of Mexican American drop out prone youth in an individualized study program furnish some leads relative to the inadequacy of traditional coping styles and gender-role definitions. The youth complain of their parents' inability to understand their emotional and behavioral needs as American adolescents. The young women, in particular, see the traditional submissive role of the Mexican woman as inadequate for themselves. The young men, viewing their parents as inadequate in the larger Anglo culture, tend to look to their peers for group solidarity. As a side note, it may well be that the survival of Mexican American gangs is closely related to the Mexican group solidarity within the family.

It needs to be remembered, however, that the traditional structure of the Mexican family as well as the traditional Mexican American family requires an overall culture in which the family is the smallest social system that reflects the overall national social system. Within North American society, this macro support system is missing.

Strains, therefore, in the working class Mexican

American family structure may become an occasion for situationally sensitive curriculum development and provider practice. At the same time, the earlier admonition against generalization should be remembered. Differential rates of acculturation may appear within adult members of a family as well as between adult and adolescent members of a family. Given that evidence of traditional coping styles and gender-role definitions and behaviors are present in the adult Mexican American community, how does one move from possibility to curriculum and provider practice?

Implications for Curriculum and Provider Practices

If passive coping styles and traditional gender-role definitions are present in a significant portion of the potential adult education clientele, how does the adult educator surface their presence? As was stated earlier, by indirect means more often than direct means. Since many adult education programs are part of union or unified school districts, social indicators of needs may be deduced from non-adult behaviors. This calls for some networking with provider colleagues in elementary and secondary schools in the community.

The adult educator will need to exhibit the continuing educational needs desired of adult students by including the community of educators as resource persons. Given the all too frequent separation of adult educators from elementary and secondary educators, learning from the latter professionals may be a new experience. When it is considered that all education should be responsive to a community rather than to a closely guarded professionally generated curriculum, provider networking begins to make sense. And insofar as the two variables cited here come from the literature of the behavioral sciences, there may be a need to network with college or university providers in these disciplines.

As a practical example, the theme of this paper grew out of some shared perceptions between the two authors, one a coordinator of adult educator provider education and the other a reading developer at the secondary level. Networking with one's colleagues at the elementary and secondary level may reveal a need for what is frequently termed "parent education" or "parent participation." While these terms are

usually intended to argue that parents need to involve themselves more actively with the education of their children, there may also be a need for another kind of adult education: teacher and administrator education and participation in the learning needs of the community. Networking may also involve contacts with public and private service agencies within the community. Pastors, ministers, priests, community relations officers, social workers, supermarket personnel, and restaurant workers have valuable insights into the learning needs of their consumer audiences.

The initial process of networking should not omit those parents who are active in one or more community agencies. Such parents are experts at surviving in the community and may well be able to educate the educator. There is no reason why networking cannot begin within the context of an adult education course termed "networking." With the mix of roles thusfar cited, the adult educator begins a collaborative process of curriculum development within which unmet learning needs of adults can be surfaced. The provider practice that is most critically required is that of facilitator

rather than authoritarian provider.

The desired outcome of the adult education curriculum centered upon networking is a collaboratively developed listing of adult learning needs. Here, again, the learning needs may not be restricted to community adults. The earlier example of a possible intergenerational conflict concerning coping styles and gender-role may lead to curriculum changes at the elementary and secondary schools. At the same time, in-service adult education for teachers and administrators may be another outcome of a curriculum based upon community networking.

One possible outcome of a collaboratively structured networking curriculum might be some significant changes in the ways that public education at all levels is structured. The possibility of such changes may appear risky to the professional educator. However, if professional educators view themselves as lifelong learners, positive change and growth are essential to professional identity. In an open system (Buckley, 1968), feedback is critical to system survival. Networking, therefore, becomes an important implication

for curriculum generation and professional practice.

If significant learning needs for professional, service and community adults become surfaced in the networking adult education class, curriculum development strategies and recruitment strategies for classes generated through this process need to be launched. Returning to the topic of intergenerational and between peer conflicts, participants in the networking class become logical recruiters for specific classes tailored to critical adult learning needs. Or, it may be that higher education participants in the networking class may want to develop, implement and analyze a process by which a larger sample of community adults may give their feedback. Such a process may be attractive to secondary and elementary provider networking participants. Whatever the outcome, it is suggested that the same collaborative approach be utilized in acquiring, processing and analyzing information.

Within the context of the networking class, participants may need to find ways of working past the possible threat to males or females leaving the home for formal learning and subsequent role changes.

Strategies may also need to be developed to attract the female who fears that a change in her self-image might lead to problems with her companion. The development of male and female support groups may well become part of the strategies developed in the networking class. Yet, given the value of children in the Mexican American family and the frustration that many Mexican American parents face in relating to their children concerning standards of behavior, a networking class outcome such as a class in parent-child communication might be highly attractive. But the way that one entitles such a class should be open to the suggestions of community participants in the networking class.

What has been attempted here is an exposition of two possibly critical variables that affect learning needs of segments of the Mexican American adult community. Passive coping and traditional role-gender definitions may also affect the behavioral development of younger members of the family. Using these two variables as an example, a networking process has been suggested as a way of defining and meeting unmet adult

learning needs within a professional, private and public sector, and community adult system. The outcome, as envisioned here, is deliberately structured change within a community rather than individualistic learning restricted to the adult education classroom.

References

- Acosta, F. X. (1984). Clinical and empirical gains of psychotherapy. In J. L. Martinez, Jr. & R. H. Mendoza (Eds.), Chicano psychology (2nd Ed.) (pp. 167-168). New York: Academic.
- Andrade, S. J. (1980). Family planning practices of Mexican Americans. In M. B. Melville (Ed.), Twice a minority (p. 29). St. Louis: Mosby.
- Arzipe, L. (1986). La sociedad invisible [The invisible society], Nexos, 9, (101), 33-37.
- Buckley, W. (Ed.). (1968). Modern systems research for the behavioral scientist. Chicago: Aldine.
- Diaz-Guerrero, R. (1984). The psychological study of the Mexican. In J. L. Martinez, Jr. & R. H. Mendoza (Eds.), Chicano psychology (2nd. Ed.), (pp. 253-264). New York: Academic.
- Mendoza, R. H. (1984). Acculturation and sociocultural variability. In J. L. Martinez, Jr. & R. H. Mendoza (Eds.), Chicano psychology (2nd. Ed.), (pp. 63-74). New York: Academic.